

Resolution of Council

15 May 2023

Item 11.9

Supporting the Powerhouse

Moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Ellsmore –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the Powerhouse Museum is the major branch of the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences in Sydney, and owned by the NSW Government;
- (ii) the Powerhouse Museum has a diverse collection encompassing all sorts of technology including decorative arts, science, communication, transport, costume, furniture, media, computer technology, space technology and steam engines;
- (iii) the Museum has existed under various names for over 125 years, however, it was opened in 1988 as the Powerhouse;
- (iv) Powerhouse staff and city of Sydney community members have voiced their concerns over the upkeep of the historic building, reporting that it has been extremely neglected, with a downgrade in the number and quality of services and objects;
- (v) the Ultimo Post Office adjoining the Powerhouse Museum was heritage listed in 1999;
- (vi) the Powerhouse Museum former warehouse buildings, including the interiors, were heritage listed in 2020;
- (vii) heritage architect Alan Croker reported that the former NSW Liberal Government buried a Conservation Management Plan on the heritage significance of the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum site;

- (viii) the draft Conservation Management Plan is reported to have found that the entire Ultimo site should have been placed in the state heritage register in the 1980s;
 - (ix) the Conservation Management Plan published by the former NSW Liberal Government last May was criticised by the National Trust as “inadequate” and “not comprehensively address[ing] the needs or values of the precinct”;
 - (x) the City of Sydney was also critical of the former NSW Liberal Government’s failure to adequately address the heritage value of the site in the City’s response to the Draft Concept Plan (DCP) in 2022;
 - (xi) that the State Significant Development exhibited for public comment received 91 individual submissions of which 85 were objections and 15 submissions from community interest groups of which nine were objections; and
 - (xii) that despite the many and manifest flaws in the development, the then Planning Minister, Anthony Roberts, signed off on it in February 2023, just before the NSW Government entered the caretaker period;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate the entire Powerhouse Museum site for heritage significance; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the new Minister for the Arts, John Graham:
- (i) restating the City of Sydney’s concerns;
 - (ii) congratulating him on his public commitment to ending the secrecy and lack of transparency surrounding the Powerhouse Museum Ultimo site plans;
 - (iii) reaffirming that the site should remain in public ownership and control;
 - (iv) requesting he take all possible steps to ensure the heritage value of the site is respected and protected; and
 - (v) requesting that he urgently review the contractual obligations entered into by the former NSW Government for the site, and the project scope.

The motion was carried on the following show of hands –

Ayes (9) The Chair (the Lord Mayor), Councillors Chan, Davis, Ellsmore, Gannon, Kok, Scott, Weldon and Worling

Noes (1) Councillor Jarrett.

Motion carried.

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